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(54) Method and system for providing evaluation of text-based products

(57) A system and computer-based method for providing, in a network (130) environment, customized text content ratings and/or review (or recommendations) based on certain information, such as information concerning the text content that a customer has read. The system includes a first (or book) database, a customer database (170), a database server (110) for searching, retrieving and comparing data from the databases, a web server (120) to connect the database server (110) to the network (130), and a customer connected to the database server (110) over a network (130). In one embodiment, the customer performs a book registration function followed by a book rating function. In the registration function, information regarding the books and other periodicals that have been read by the customer is acquired, compiled by the database server (110), and stored in the customer database (170).

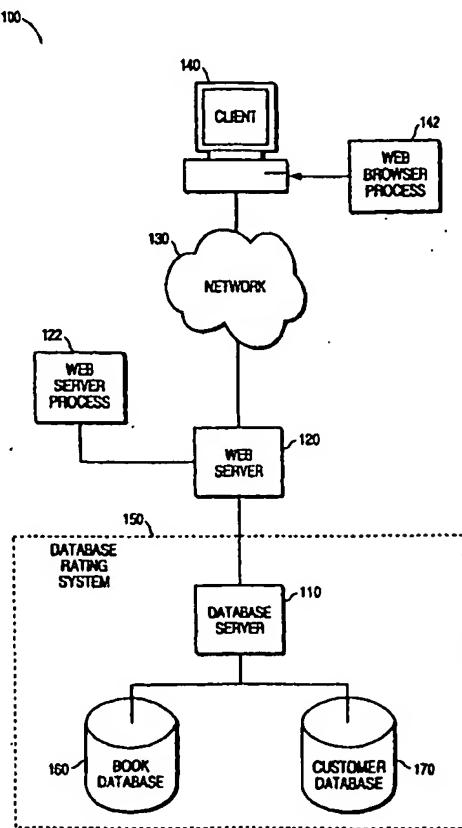


FIG.1

Description

[0001] The present invention relates generally to information (e.g. information regarding product) acquisition and product reviews, and more specifically, to a computer system for providing ratings for customized text base product and/or a computer system for recommending the product.

[0002] There exists many computer systems for providing information, ratings and/or recommendations on books or written materials for general public or predetermined user. In such networked computer systems, the requirements for determining value of the information can vary greatly in response to the input contents from the subject user (or "customer" hereinafter), or in response to the preference (or object etc.) of the customer. For example, in situations where a customer desires book information, reviews or recommendations via the World Wide Web (e.g., a book shopping search, such as on Amazon.com®), knowledge of parameters such as what types of books the customer enjoys as well as which books the customer has already read are important for providing the most useful results. Not only do these parameters vary greatly from customer to customer, but they can also include information as to how the tastes of one customer correspond to those of another. One method of generating such personalized review is known as collaborative filtering.

[0003] Collaborative filtering methods in this field operate at the most basic level by asking each customer to rate books or other written matter that the customer is familiar with. These ratings are then analyzed and used to correlate and divulge various specific characteristics or commonalities from the totality of ratings data. A profile may be derived for each customer, and comparison of one customer's profile with similar profiles can be done to identify items of potential interest.

[0004] Regardless of the specific parameters or filtering method involved, however, the information as to publications, ratings of the publications and/or review (recommendation) of the publications must be useful to the customer and helpful for the task at hand to ensure continued popularity and success of that network environment. For example, current methods of providing book ratings or recommendations are frequently unsatisfactory due to the lack of information provided, lack of more appropriate information, and/or the inefficient or otherwise problematic functionality of acquiring information. Particularly with regard to the provision of book-related systems over networked computer environments, a customer is frequently given ratings or recommendations that are only based on information on what other people thought about the written material in general. However, for ratings or recommendations that require more useful and/or individual-specific response, current methods of book or text content related assistance and interaction have significant drawbacks.

[0005] One problem with current methods of providing

such text content-related assistance is that the procedures undertaken to determine the ratings or recommendations do not take into account information relating to the current customer's profile, likes and/or dislikes.

5 For text content-related assistance that involves some analysis of the current customer's preferences to provide useful information for more helpful ratings and recommendations, this presents a burden in the provision of effective assistance.

10 [0006] A drawback with some current collaborative methods of providing text content-related assistance over a network is that the procedures undertaken to acquire and populate a database with current customer preference data frequently present a complex, large or frustrating burden to customers, particularly new users, of the system. For systems that otherwise derive advantage from ease-of-use and/or other such characteristics of attractiveness to a customer, this again presents a burden in acquiring appropriate results and presenting helpful information.

15 [0007] Another drawback is that current methods of such ratings or recommendations typically use static or overly simplistic algorithms for determining potential books for a customer. This approach often leads to non-dynamic results and misses the objective of obtaining information that is as useful as possible.

20 [0008] Therefore, current systems and methods of rating or recommendation are generally unable to provide the usefulness, flexibility, and customer-specific objectives required to efficiently and effectively provide the satisfactory results necessary for meaningful identification, rating or recommendation of text content, such as books.

25 [0009] The present invention provides a network computer system and computer-based method for providing customized text content ratings and/or recommendations based on certain information, such as information concerning the text content that a customer has read. The network computer system includes a first (or book) database (160), a customer database (170), a database server (110) for searching, retrieving and comparing data from these databases, a web server (120) to connect the database server (110) to the network (130), and a computer for a customer connected to the database server (110) over a network (130). In one embodiment, the customer performs a book registration function followed by a book rating function. In the book registration function, information regarding the books and other periodicals that have been read by the customer is acquired, compiled by the database server (110), and stored in the customer database (170). One book registration method done prior to any rating function includes the generation of a search result list (based on criteria entered by the customer), from which the customer can then select one or more books to register. In the book rating function, a customer establishes or selects a book that he is considering, and the web server requests the database server (110) to search keyword

data of the customer database (170) based on keywords associated with the chosen book. The database server (110): (1) determines one or more books having the most matching keywords and grades the books according to a calculated similarity rate, and (2) presents similarity information and a rating (for the chosen book) keyed to the closest book the customer has read.

[0010] In a system of another embodiment, there is no initial book registration function as described above. The database server (110) first provides (via keyword matching) a list of books related to a chosen book, allowing the customer to then select and register any books he has read from the list. Yet another embodiment employs another algorithm to provide a different result; wherein data on related books is retrieved, sorted according to sales, keywords and other factors, and presented on a result list. An unsuitable result list can yield a new search based on different factors.

[0011] Other objects, features, and advantages of the present invention will be apparent from the accompanying drawings and from the detailed description that follows below.

[0012] The present invention is illustrated by way of example and not limitation in the figures of the accompanying drawings, in which like references indicate similar elements, and in which:

- Figure 1 illustrates a block diagram of a computer network environment that implements embodiments of the present invention;
- Figure 2 illustrates an exemplary database server web page output for the book registration function, showing a preliminary input/request page to be filled in by the customer, according to one embodiment of the present invention;
- Figure 3 illustrates an exemplary database server web page output for the book registration function, showing a list of potential books for customer selection, according to one embodiment of the present invention;
- Figure 4 illustrates an exemplary database server web page output for the book rating function, showing a preliminary input/request page to be filled in by the customer, according to one embodiment of the present invention;
- Figure 5 illustrates an exemplary database server web page output for the book rating function, showing a list of results from the customer's search request (ideally including the intended book), according to one embodiment of the present invention;
- Figure 6 illustrates an exemplary database server web page output for the book estimating function, showing the chosen book and its correlation to the closest registered book, according to one embodiment of the present invention; and
- Figure 7 is a graph illustrating the range of keyword matching that corresponds to an acceptable range in an alternate algorithm used to provide a desirable

search results, according to one embodiment of the present invention.

[0013] In a network environment, a system and computer-based method for providing book (as an example for a text content) ratings and/or recommendations that are customized based on customer profiles and/or other information is described. In the following description, for purposes of explanation, numerous specific details are set forth in order to provide a thorough understanding of the present invention. It will be evident, however, to one of ordinary skill in the art, that the present invention may be practiced without these specific details. In other instances, well-known structures and devices are shown in block diagram form to facilitate explanation. The description of preferred embodiments is not intended to limit the scope of the claims appended hereto.

Hardware Overview

[0014] Aspects of the present invention may be implemented on one or more computers executing software instructions. According to one embodiment of the present invention, computer system, which comprises server computer (hereinafter referred as "server") and client computer (hereinafter referred as "client"), transmit and receive data over a computer network or standard telephone line. Internet-based communication via bi-directional networks is the preferred embodiment, although wireless and other data transmission systems not requiring a persistent cable connection are also contemplated. The steps of accessing, downloading, and manipulating the data, as well as other aspects of the present invention are implemented by central processing units (CPU) in the server and client executing sequences of instructions stored in a memory. The memory may be a random access memory (RAM), read-only memory (ROM), a persistent store, such as a mass storage device, or any combination of these devices. Execution of the sequences of instructions causes the CPU to perform steps according to embodiments of the present invention.

[0015] The instructions may be loaded into the memory of the server or client from a storage device or from one or more other computer systems over a network connection. For example, a client computer may transmit a sequence of instructions to the server computer in response to a message transmitted to the client over a network by the server. As the server receives the instructions over the network connection, it stores the instructions in memory. The server may store the instructions for later execution, or it may execute the instructions as they arrive over the network connection. In some cases, the downloaded instructions may be directly supported by the CPU. In other cases, the instructions may not be directly executable by the CPU, and may instead be executed by an interpreter that interprets the instructions. In other embodiments, hardwired circuitry

may be used in place of, or in combination with, software instructions to implement the present invention. Thus, the present invention is not limited to any specific combination of hardware circuitry and software, nor to any particular source for the instructions executed by the server or client.

[0016] Additionally, although the embodiments of the present invention are described in relation to the rating and review of books, it should be understood that such embodiments are also directed to the review of other types of written text-based, or graphical material, such as magazines, computer generated text, illustrations, and other types of written or graphical material.

System configuration

[0017] Figure 1 is a block diagram of a network computer system that can be used to provide book ratings and/or recommendations that can be tailored to a preference or etc. of an individual customer and to other information, according to embodiments of the present invention. The book rating and recommendation system 100 of Figure 1 enables book ratings and review (recommendations) to be customized based on books that the customer has read, and more specifically, based on keywords or other information related to and/or representative of books that have been read by the customer and registered in the customer database 170.

[0018] As shown in Figure 1, the book rating and recommendation system 100 can be discussed in terms of a server side having a database server 110, a book database 160, a customer database 170, and a web server 120 for connecting the database server 110 to a bi-directional network 130. The database server 110 is shown connected directly to the databases 160, 170 in this embodiment, however server connection to these or comparable databases can be made over any type of network as well. Data and information covering all books within the scope of the system are stored in the book database 160. The customer database 170 accumulate information about the books that each individual customer or customer has read. In this embodiment, the database server 110, the book database 160 and the customer database 170 may be addressed as a single unit and referred to as the rating/database system 150, as seen in Figure 1. On the server side, many embodiments of hardware configurations are possible; the web server 120 and the database server 110 can be the same computer, or the database server 110 and one of the databases can be one computer, etc. Essentially, these hardware components can be arranged in any functioning variation.

[0019] The database server 110 is a server system that is set up to handle book-related search requests from a customer. Access to the database server 110, which may comprise one of several servers, is facilitated through web server 120 and a typical device known as a router (not shown) on the network 130. The web server

120 and then the database server 110 interact with and/or receive interactive data from a customer, and they execute different server functionality, such as the database server 110 procedure of accessing requested book data/information from the book database 160, as detailed below. Along with handling such requests for access of book data and information associated with the book data, the database server 110 also processes the customer's book data from the customer database 170.

5 10 15 [0020] All of the necessary data and information handled by both the web server 120 and the database server 110, then, is generally transmitted by the web server 120 via the network by means of a known networking protocol standard, such as FTP (file transfer protocol).

20 [0020] As seen in Figure 1, the customer side includes a client 140 and an web browser process 142 executed in the client 140. The client 140 can be a personal computer, a set top box, a computer/gaming device such as a Sony® PlayStation®2, a computing device of comparable capabilities, or any terminal device providing access to the system. The web browser process 142 is complimentary to a web server process 122 (executed by the web server 120) on the other side of the network 130. In the presently preferred embodiment, the web

25 30 35 server 120 is a World-Wide Web (WWW) server that stores data in the form of 'web pages' and transmits these pages as Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) files over the network 130 (preferably the Internet) to one or more of the client 140. For this embodiment, the client computer 140 runs the "web browser" process 142 to access the web pages served by web server 120. Additional web based content can be provided to client computer 140 by separate content providers, such as a supplemental server (not shown).

40 45 [0021] In other embodiments, the network 130 may be a Wide Area Network (WAN), a Local Area Network (LAN), or any combination of these and/or the Internet. The network is normally a bi-directional digital communications network that connects a client's hardware with the web server 120. With current technologies, a CATV (cable television) bi-directional network, ISDN (Integrated Services Digital Network), DSL (Digital Subscriber Line), or xDSL high-speed networks are examples of existing network infrastructures enabling the necessary network connections for implementing embodiments of the present invention, though they are not intended to be exclusive as to the types of networks capable of practicing the present invention.

50 55 [0022] In one embodiment of the present invention, the book rating and recommendation system of the currently preferred embodiment is realized by means of a graphical user interface (GUI) displayed on applicable computers or devices participating over the network. One objective of the invention is to supply a customer with the power of interactive capabilities to register the books he or she has read. In general a web server, such as web server 120 in Figure 1, handles all of the initial functionality surrounding the GUI and associated inter-

activity of the customer.

[0023] There are multiple graphical user interfaces showing input and display information for the book registration and evaluation or rating functionalities, according to one or more embodiments of the present invention. As used herein, the term evaluation most properly includes both the rating and similarity data or estimates provided for a search item (i.e., desired book), although the term rating may also be used in this broad fashion (i.e., to cover both rating and similarity data or estimates). In one embodiment, a customer initially registers books he has read. A customer then interacts with the rating functionality, which is provided by the client 140, to produce a review, recommendation or estimate of interest. Preliminary and subsequent graphical user interfaces that provide interactive registration options and functionality for display at the client 140 are shown in Figures 2 and 3. Three stages of graphical user interfaces that provide interactive rating and estimate functionality or options for display at the client 140 are shown in Figures 4, 5 and 6.

Book Registration Process

[0024] A graphical user interface displaying an exemplary web page output for book registration, provided to the client 140 by the web server 120 and showing a preliminary input/request page to be filled in by the customer, according to one embodiment of the present invention is shown in Figure 2. The preliminary registration GUI 200 of Figure 2 includes a header field 202, an instruction field 204, a book title section 206, a book genre section 208, a book author section 210, a date of publication section 212, a search button 214, and a reset button 216. The header field 202 recites "Registration of books you have read," outlining the purpose of these two GUIs (Figures 2 and 3) and the registration function in general. The instruction field 204 recites "Please enter at least one item and click on the 'search' button," indicating the instruction for using the next four search fields to locate or identify books that the customer has read or has potentially read.

[0025] The four fields of Figure 2 are the book title field 206, the book genre field 208, the book author field 210, and the date of publication field 212. Each of these four fields is comprised of a header line (stating 'title,' 'genre,' 'author' and 'date of publication,' respectively), and a text entry box, as is well known in the field of interactive web-based search environments. The reset button 216 is provided to clear unwanted entries from the text entry boxes of each of the above four fields. As one of the last steps of the customer registration process, the search button 214 can be selected to execute a search of the book database 160 for books that satisfy the one or more criteria entered in the fields above.

[0026] In the preferred embodiment of the registration process, the customer operates the client 140 for transmitting the search criteria over the World Wide Web, to

the web server 120; the web server 120 then transmits the search criteria to the database server 110. The database server 110 searches the book database 160 and retrieves information associated with the book(s) that the customer is attempting to register.

[0027] The book database 160 stores various data (hereinafter referred as "book data") for each of the books within the scope of the system. This book data includes at least a book identification category, a title category and a keyword category for rating, and may optionally include an author category, a summary category, a contents category, a publisher category, sales information, publication date, an evaluation by other customers category and/or any other book-related categories such as those being utilized by Amazon.com®. In the server side, once the database server 110 locates one or more matching books from the book database 160, information on these one or more matching books is transmitted to the web server 120 for transmission over the network to the client 140.

[0028] A graphical user interface displaying an exemplary web page output for book registration provided to the client 140 by the web server 120, showing the subsequent (to Figure 2) input/request page to be addressed by the customer, according to one embodiment of the present invention is shown in Figure 3. The subsequent registration GUI 300 of exemplary shown in Figure 3 includes a header field 302, an instruction field 304, a results list header box 306, a results list 320, one or more 'more detail' buttons 322, and a registration button 330. The header field 302 recites "Registration of books you have read," outlining the purpose of these two GUIs and the registration function in general. The instruction field 304 recites "Please choose the book(s) you have read and click on the 'registration' button," indicating the instruction for commencing the population of the customer database (170) with the books that the customer has read.

[0029] Below the instruction field 304, as seen in Figure 3, is the results list 320 and the results list header box 306. The results list header box 306 contains the column headings of the particular categories, for the items in the result list, that are desired to communicate the potential books that the customer may have read. In the embodiment shown in Figure 3, the results list header box 306 includes title and author headers of the potential books, as well as a check box column-header. The corresponding results list 320 contains the titles of the potential books (here, ABC and XYZ) as well as the authors of the potential books (here, Jeff Richards and Tom Bednash). The result list 320 can contain a single book or a plurality of books. The result list 320 also contains check boxes selectable with a cursor/mouse that will flag that entry for registration into the customer database 170. All of the flagged potential book entries are then registered into the customer database (170) when the registration button 330 is selected.

[0030] The above book registration methodology

lends itself well to preliminary search techniques that allow a customer to search a book database 160 based on one or more fields, and then choose any books he has read from the potential books in the result list 320. With regard to the sequence of network environment steps, firstly, the web server 120 sends information regarding the preliminary registration GUI to the client 140. The client 140 then displays this information, as seen in Figure 2. After the information input by the customer is transmitted over the network, then, the web server 120 requests the database server 110 to search the book database 160 based on the inputted information. The database server 110 searches the book database 160 and sends the search results to the web server 120. According to these results, the web server 110 generates a result list 320 of books and sends it to the client 140, who displays the result list 320 as seen in Figure 3. Once the customer selects the applicable books and clicks the 'registration' button, the selected book data is sent to the web server 120. The web server 120 then requests the database server 110 to store the assigned book identification in the customer database 170, associated with the customer ID or customer profile.

[0031] As used throughout this disclosure, the step of registering can consist of simply storing the information in question, or it can also include additional methodology such as that detailed throughout the specification and figures. A customer may also register books that he or she has read in a variety of other fashions, many of which are well known. The customer might simply be able to enter the book ISBN (International Standard Book Number), or if the books are present, the customer can use a barcode reader to scan the books in. Additionally, books may be registered by the recordation and transfer of such book information from purchase records. Such a purchase record cannot only be imported from online purchases, but also from offline purchases using any sort of identification record (i.e., credit card, etc.). In addition to registering books purchased at either conventional or online stores, a customer can also register any magazines that the customer has read or receives regularly.

Book Evaluation (Rating, Similarity decision and Estimation) Processes

[0032] A graphical user interface displaying an exemplary web page output for the book rating function, showing a preliminary input/request page to be filled in by the customer, according to one embodiment of the present invention, is shown in Figure 4. The preliminary rating GUI 400 of Figure 4 includes a header field 402, a first instruction field 404, a second instruction field 406, a book title section 408, a book genre section 410, a book author section 412, a date of publication section 414, a search button 416 and a rest button 418. The header field 402 recites "Rating the book for you," outlining the purpose of this GUI, and also the rating func-

tion, in general. The first instruction field 404 of Figure 4 delineates the first (preliminary) step of the rating function, reciting "Search for the book you are considering." The second instruction field 406 of Figure 4 provides specific instruction for the first step in the rating function, as outlined in the first instruction field 404; the specific instruction is "Please enter at least one item and click on the 'search' button." The second instruction field 406, then, indicates instruction for using the next four search fields to locate or identify books that the customer wishes to get an estimate for. The items to be entered in the search fields are detailed below.

[0033] The four search fields of Figure 4 are the book title field 408, the book genre field 410, the book author field 412, and the date of publication field 414. Each of these four fields is comprised of a header line (stating 'title,' 'genre,' 'author' and 'date of publication,' respectively), and a text entry box, as is well known in the field of interactive web-based search environments. The reset button 418 is provided to clear unwanted entries from the text entry boxes of each of the above four fields. Further, the search button 416 is provided to execute a search of the book database for books that satisfy the one or more criteria entered in the fields above.

[0034] A graphical user interface displaying an exemplary web page output for the book rating function, provided to the client 140 by the web server 120 and showing a subsequent input/request page to be filled in by the customer, according to one embodiment of the present invention, is shown in Figure 5. The subsequent rating GUI 500 of Figure 5 has a header field 502, a first instruction field 504, a second instruction field 506, a results list header box 508, a results list 520, one or more 'more detail' buttons 528, and a 'get estimate' button 530. The header field 502 recites "Rating the book for you," as with Figure 4. The first instruction field 504 of Figure 5 delineates the second (subsequent) step of the rating function, reciting "Identify the book." The second instruction field 506 of Figure 5 provides specific instruction for this second step in the rating function (per first instruction field 504 of Figure 5); the specific instruction is "Please choose the book you are looking for and click on the 'get estimate' button. The second instruction field 506, then, indicates instruction for selecting one or more of the books from the results list 520, which is described in detailed below.

[0035] The results list 520 and the results list header box 508 are located below the second instruction field 506 in the embodiment of Figure 5. The results list header box 508 of Figure 5 contains the column headings of the particular categories, for the items in the result list 520, that are desired to communicate the potential books that the customer might consider receiving a rating on. In the embodiment shown in Figure 5, the results list header box includes title and author headers of the potential books, as well as a check box column-header. The corresponding results list 520 contains the titles of the potential books (here, ABC and XYZ) as well as the

authors of the potential books (here, Jeff Richards and Tom Bednash). The result list 520 also contains check boxes selectable with a cursor/mouse that will flag that entry for getting an estimate or rating. When the 'get estimate' button 590 is selected, the flagged book entry is then processed by the database server to determine an estimate or rating according to the respective algorithm. The resultant estimate or rating is then displayed to the customer, as shown in Figure 6 and described next.

[0036] According to one embodiment of the present invention, a graphical user interface that shows an exemplary web page output displaying of an estimate or rating of the book that has been determined (by the database server) to be an appropriate result for the book the customer has selected, is shown in Figure 6. The estimate GUI 600 of Figure 6 includes a header field 602, a book identifier field 604, a book information field 606, a first 'more detail' button 608, a value field 612, a similarity field 614, and a second 'more detail' button 620. The header field 602 recites "Estimate of the book for you," explaining that the information below describes, with respect to the book selected by the customer, an estimate keyed to the most appropriate book registered by the customer. Field headings such as 'title' and 'author' are contained in the book identifier field 604 for the purpose of indicating the corresponding information in the book information field 606. Data corresponding to these field headings are then located in the book information field 606 (i.e., 'xyz' and 'Tom Bednash' in Figure 6). The first 'more detail' button 608 may be selected by a customer to show further details of the prospective book, such as publication information, a book summary or the like.

[0037] The value field 612 and the similarity field 614 are located below these book-related fields on the estimate GUI 600. The value field 612 supplies the customer with an overall rating of the estimated book; the gauge on the right side of this field (i.e., 0-5 stars, etc.) provides the customer with some sort of general value of reading the book, as determined by empirical techniques such as collaborative filtering. The similarity field 614 is also located below the book-related fields, and provides a measure of how closely the estimated book matches the chosen book. According to the method used, the magnitude of this measure correlates to how closely the estimated book matched the chosen book, and can be expressed in simple percentages. The second 'more detail' button 620 can be located in the lower right hand corner, near to the similarity field 614, and is selected by a customer to provide further detail with regard to the book upon which the estimate has been keyed.

[0038] There are usually six steps in the preferred rating/estimate functionality associated with Figures 4-6. A customer first enters information concerning a book, about which the customer is wondering whether he or she should read. This information is entered at the client 120 via the interactive GUI of Figure 4. Next, the web server 120 requests the database server to search the

book database 160 based on the information sent by the customer via the client 140. These search results are then sent to the web server 120, and the web server 120 sends corresponding GUI information to the client 140.

5 According to this GUI information, the client 140 displays the subsequent rating GUI 500 shown in Figure 5. From the subsequent rating GUI 500 screen, the customer chooses or confirms the book that he or she is considering.

10 [0039] By using this chosen book identity, then, the web server 120 requests the database server 110 to search all keyword data of the customer database (170) 160 based on the keywords of the chosen book data. The database server finds 110 a book that has the most keywords in common to the chosen book keywords. The database server can also calculate the similarity rate of the keywords, and grades the chosen book according to the rate.

20 <Instantaneous Registration of Relevant Books, and Algorithms>

[0040] According to an alternate embodiment of the present invention, a customer does not have to register the books that he or she has read in advance of the book rating process. In the above-discussed rating/estimate process, the database server first finds the books that are related to the chosen book according to the keywords of the chosen (to be estimated) book. The list of the related books is then displayed. From this display, the customer checks all of the books he or she has read off of the list. After this alternate registration process, the rating and estimate processes are identical to the previous embodiment described above. For this alternative registration process, the checked books may be registered in the customer database (170) so that the customer does not have to input the same books. When the list of related books is displayed the next time, the registered books should be checked before the customer's input (checking).

35 [0041] Another alternate embodiment of the present invention contemplates the scenario in which a customer has not identified a particular book for rating and estimation. In this situation, the rating algorithm is different from the algorithm used in the preferred embodiment above. A four-step algorithm is used to find a book that suits a customer's taste. In the first step, the database server 110 narrows the object field based on keywords or natural language inputted by a customer, and then

40 the book data of the books that the customer is interested in is extracted from the book database 160. In the second step, the book data is sorted according to sales.

45 [0042] In the third step, book data having both too many and too few keywords equal to the keywords in the customer's book data are eliminated by use of the keyword matching. Figure 7 shows a keyword-match graph 700 illustrating a representative bell curve 706 associated with such keyword search results. Graph 700

has, as its x-axis, the 'matching rate' 704 or quantity of keywords that match, with the greatest number of matches extending to the right. The y-axis of keyword-match graph 700 reflects the 'result rate' 702 or the quantity of books that satisfy the corresponding rate (x-axis) value of matched keywords. For example, books within the acceptable range 708 of matched keywords share a certain percentage of the sought keywords, with this range being reflected on the x-axis (i.e., perhaps a range of approximately 60-75%, as seen in Figure 7). As described above, the algorithm rejects books sharing too few keywords 710 as well as books sharing too many keywords 712, leaving books within the acceptable range 708. The matching rate of keywords (x-axis), then, relates to the result rate or quantity of books by a bell curve relationship 706. This is simply to say that a greater number of results or books will share a middle range of keyword with the chosen book, as seen in the center (highest point) of the curve, with the number of results or books tapering off as the matching rate either increases or decreases.

[0043] The fourth step is essentially a reiteration of the first three steps if the particular results are found to be unacceptable. If the results of step three are not suitable, the keywords are exchanged to another data type (i.e., author, publisher, etc.) and the matching procedure is executed again.

[0044] In the foregoing, a system has been described for providing book ratings and/or recommendations that can be customized based on customer profiles or other criteria. Although the present invention has been described with reference to specific exemplary embodiments, it will be evident that various modifications and changes may be made to these embodiments without departing from the broader spirit and scope of the invention as set forth in the claims. Accordingly, the specification and drawings are to be regarded in an illustrative rather than a restrictive sense.

Claims

1. A method characterized in that:

said method is for providing evaluation information for text content to a customer by a system comprising a content database (160) configured to store data concerning text content and a customer database (170) configured to store data concerning text content read by the customer, and the method comprising the steps of:

storing data exclusively concerning text content actually read by the customer in the customer database (170);
 receiving a search request comprising a search item for identifying text content from the customer;

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searching the content database (160) and the customer database (170) to obtain resulting data satisfying the search item, and comparing the resulting data with data concerning text content previously read by the customer to obtain evaluation information corresponding to the search request; and transmitting the obtained evaluation information to the customer computer (140) for displaying the evaluation information in the customer computer (140).

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the evaluation information comprises rating data representing relative evaluation for content data satisfying the search item.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein the evaluation information comprising similarity data which represents the degree of similarity of the search item to at least one item included in the text content previously read by the customer.
4. The method of claim 1, wherein the evaluation information comprising:
 - rating data representing relative evaluation for content data satisfying the search item,
 - similarity data which represents the degree of similarity of the search item to at least one item included in the text content previously read by the customer.
5. The method of claim 3, wherein the similarity data is a rating of the percentage similarity between the search item and at least one item included in the text content previously read by the customer.
6. The method of claim 1, comprising the step of registering information regarding the text content previously read by the customer in the customer database (170).
7. The method of claim 6, wherein the step of registering information includes the steps of:
 - searching, once the search item for registration from the customer computer (140) is received, the content database (160) for obtaining the data satisfying the search item for registration, transmitting the results list of the search to the customer computer (140), and
 - registering the information selected by the customer from the transmitted results list.
8. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of establishing, upon providing a computer environment for inputting information of the search item to

- the customer, the search item for text content under consideration by the customer for reading.
9. The method of claim 8, wherein the step of establishing the search item comprising: 5
- upon receiving criteria information of the search from the customer computer (140), transmitting the text content item to the customer computer (140) from the content database (160), said text content being the content which is expected to be selected by the customer, and therefore expected to be material for generating the evaluation information. 10
10. The method of claim 8, wherein the search item comprising a keyword associated with the text content, or representing content of the text content, and, upon comparing the data, searching keyword fields in the customer database (170) based on keywords of the search item; and rating candidate text content according to the result of the search. 15
11. The method of claim 10, wherein rating text content having a relatively greater number of keywords obtained by the search in common with the search item under consideration higher than text content sharing fewer keywords. 20
12. The method of claim 9, wherein rating text content having a substantial number of, but not too many, keywords in common with the search item under consideration as the highest-rated text content. 25
13. A method characterized in that: 30
- said method is for providing evaluation information for text content to a customer by a system comprising a content database (160) configured to store data concerning text content and a customer database (170) configured to store data concerning text content read by the customer, and the method comprising the steps of: 35
- registering information regarding the text content previously read by the customer in the customer database (170); 40
- receiving a search request comprising a search item for identifying text content from the customer; 45
- searching the content database (160) and the customer database (170) to obtain resulting data satisfying the search item, and comparing the resulting data with data concerning text content previously read by the customer to obtain evaluation information corresponding to the search request; and 50
- generating evaluation information comprising obtained rating data, and transmitting the evaluation information to the customer computer (140) for display at the customer computer (140). 55
14. A system for providing evaluation information to a customer via bi-directional communication between the system and a customer computer (140), said customer computer (140) is programmed to transmit a search request comprising a search item for identifying text content, and to display the search result in a predetermined display, characterized in that the system comprising:
- a content database (160) configured to store data concerning text content; 15
- a customer database (170) configured to store data exclusively concerning text content actually read by the customer; 20
- a database server (110) programmed to search, upon receiving the search request from the customer computer (140), the content database (160) and the customer database (170) to obtain resulting data satisfying the search item , and comparing the resulting data with data concerning text content read by the customer to obtain evaluation information comprising rating data corresponding to the search request. 25
15. The system of claim 14, wherein the database server (110) is further programmed to register information regarding the text content previously read by the customer into the customer database (170). 30
16. The system of claim 15, wherein the database server (110) is further programmed to obtain similarity data which represents the degree of similarity of the resulting data and the text content previously read by the customer, and said database server (110) is programmed to transmit the evaluation information, said evaluation information including the similarity data for allowing the customer computer (140) to operate for displaying the similarity data. 35
17. A system for providing evaluation information for text content to a customer via by bi-directional communication between the system and a customer computer (140), said customer computer (140) is programmed to transmit a search request comprising a search item for identifying text content and to display the search result in a predetermined display, characterized in that the system comprising:
- a content database (160) configured to store data concerning text content; 40
- a customer database (170) configured to store data concerning text content read by the cus-

- 5 tomer;
a database server (110), connected to the content and customer database (170)s, programmed to:
- register information regarding the text content read by the customer into the customer database (170); and
search, upon receiving the search request from the customer computer (140), the content database (160) and customer database (170) to obtain search result,
compare the search result and the data concerning text content previously read by the customer, thereby obtaining evaluation information for the text content, corresponding to the content of search item.
- 10 18. The system of claim 17, wherein the evaluation information comprising at least one of rating data and the similarity data, said rating data represents relative evaluation for the text contents satisfying the search item, and said similarity data represents the degree of similarity between the text content satisfying the search item and the text content previously read by the customer.
- 15 19. The system of claim 17, wherein the system having two or more customer computers (140), and each customer computer (140) is configured to receive and/or transmit data between the customer computers (140) and a database server (110), said database server (110) being provided in a bi-directional communication network (130) and being adapted to transmit data bi-directionally.
- 20 20. The system of claim 17, wherein the search result comprises registration search results including a list of text content items presented to the customer as registration candidates, having the greatest number of keywords that match the keywords associated with a search item under consideration by the customer for reading.
- 25 21. The system of claim 17, wherein the search result comprises registration search results including a list of text content items presented to the customer as registration candidates, selected for having neither too many nor too few keywords equal to the keywords associated with a search item under consideration by the customer for reading.
- 30 22. The system of claim 17, wherein the search result comprises evaluation search results including an initial list of text content items, presented to the customer as recommendation candidates, generated by matching keywords with a search item selected by the customer.
- 35 40 45 50 55 23. The system of claim 17, wherein the search result further comprises an alternate list of text content items generated by matching text-content-related data other than keywords, said alternate list being created by the database server (110) in the event the initial list of text content items is unsatisfactory to the customer.
24. An article of manufacture characterized in that the article comprising a computer useable medium having computer readable program of instructions executable by the computer therein, said computer comprising a content database (160) configured to store data concerning text content and a customer database (170) configured to store data exclusively concerning text content actually read by the customer, the program of instructions including instructions for:
- receiving a search request comprising a search item for identifying text content from the customer;
searching the content database (160) and the customer database (170) to obtain resulting data satisfying the search item,
comparing the resulting data with data concerning text content previously read by the customer to obtain rating data corresponding to the search request,
obtaining similarity data representing the degree of similarity of said resulting data and said data concerning text content,
generating evaluation information comprising the obtained rating data and the similarity data, and
transmitting the generated evaluation information to a customer computer (140) for allowing the customer computer (140) to operate for displaying the evaluation information.

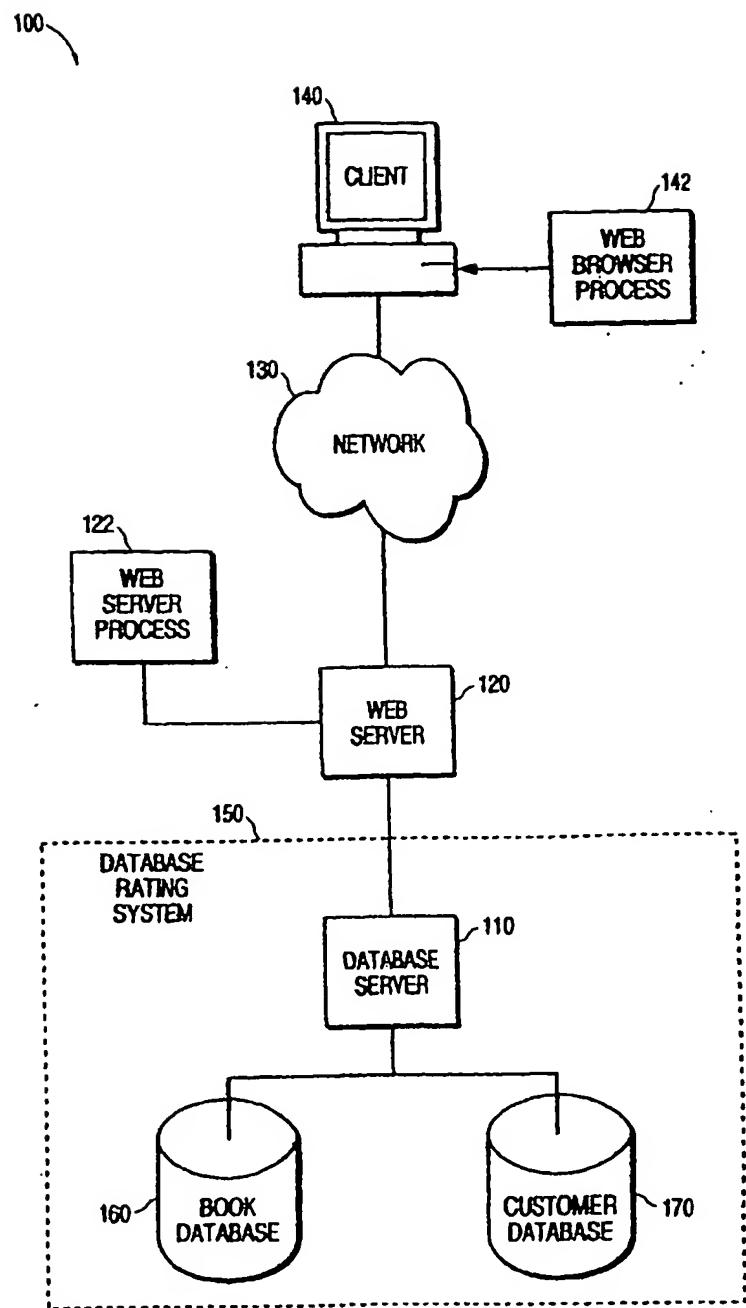


FIG.1

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202 REGISTRATION OF BOOKS YOU HAVE READ

204 PLEASE ENTER AT LEAST ONE ITEM & CLICK ON THE SEARCH BUTTON

206 TITLE

208 GENRE

210 AUTHOR

212 DATE OF PUBLICATION

214 216

FIG.2

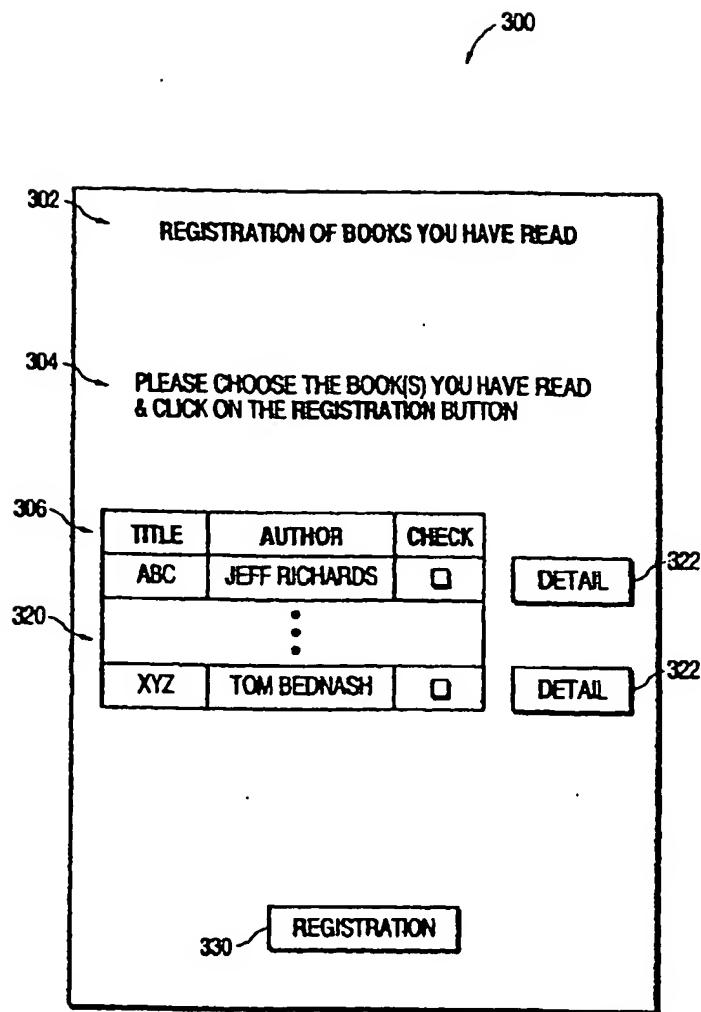


FIG.3

400

402

RATING THE BOOK FOR YOU

404 1. SEARCH FOR THE BOOK YOU ARE CONSIDERING

406 PLEASE ENTER AT LEAST ONE ITEM & CLICK ON
THE SEARCH BUTTON

408 TITLE

410 GENRE

412 AUTHOR

414 DATE OF PUBLICATION

416 418

400

FIG.4

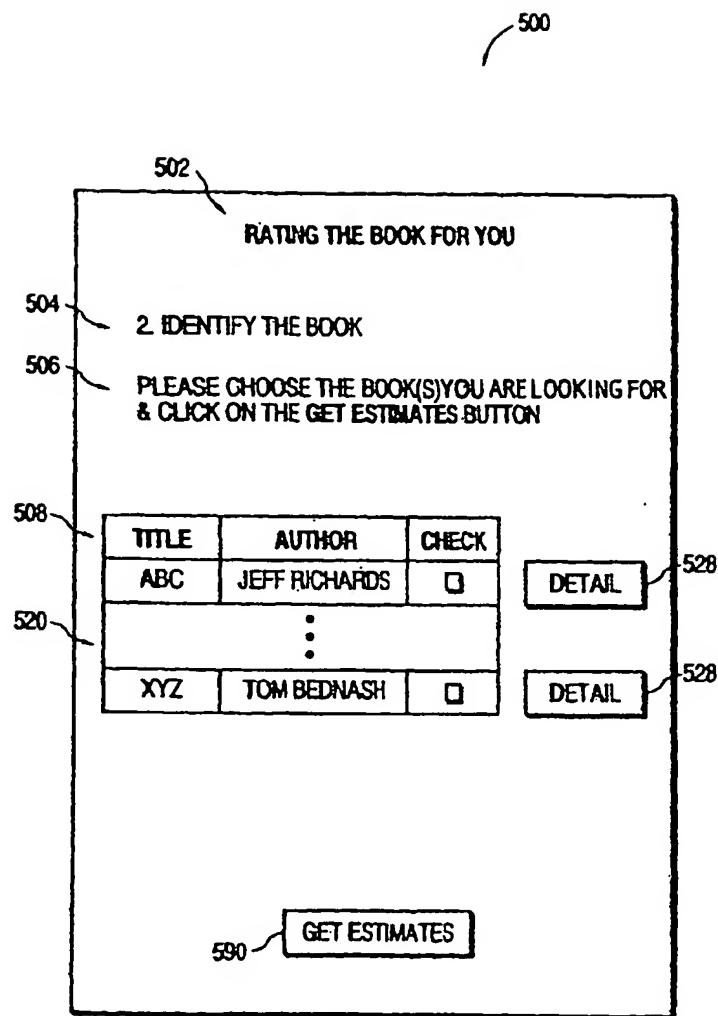


FIG.5

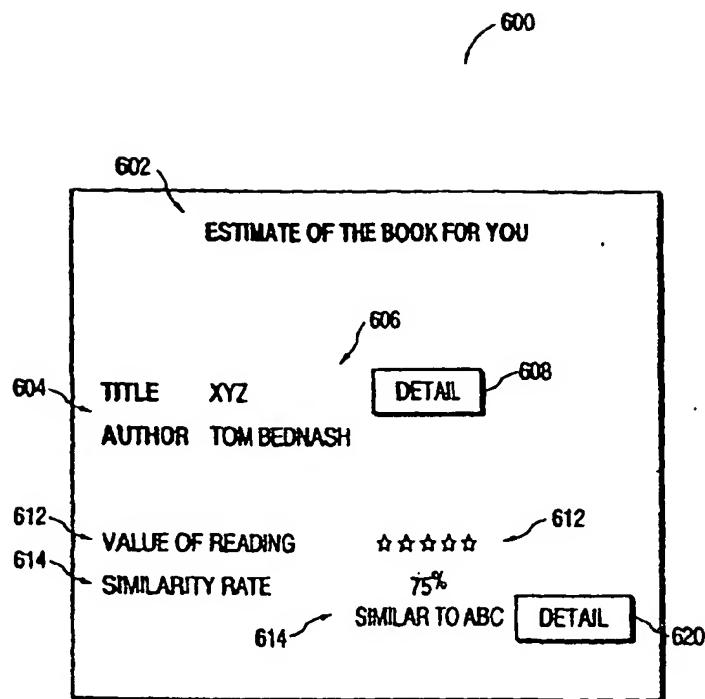


FIG.6

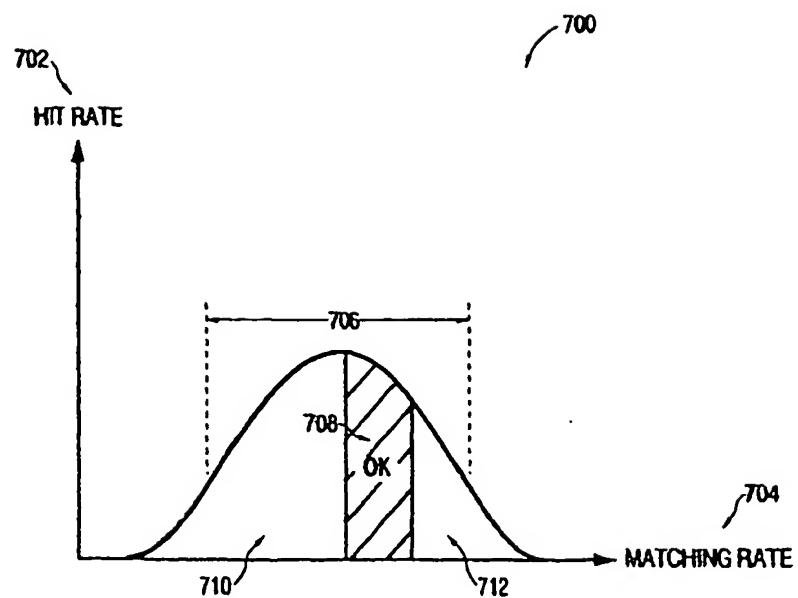


FIG.7